

REVIEWS

The body count continues, with a dash of Kung-Fu & comedy

FRIDAY THE 13TH— A NEW BEGINNING

A Paramount Pictures release. 3/85, 92 mins. In color. Director, Danny Steinmann. Producer, Timothy Silver. Executive producer, Frank Mancuso Jr. Screenplay, Martin Kitrosser, David Cohen, Danny Steinmann. Assistant director, Leon Dukevoir. Editor, Bruce Green. Production designer, Robert Howland. Special makeup effects, Martin Becker. Director of photography, Stephen L. Posey.

Tommy Jarvis John Shepard
Pam Melanie Kinnaman
Reggie Shavar Ross
Dr. Matthew Peters Richard Young
Ethel Hubbard Carol Lacatell
George Vernon Washington
Joey Dominic Brascia
Violet Tiffany Helm
Tina Debbie Sue Voorhees
Eddie John Robert Dixon
Junior Hubbard Ron Sloan

by Bill George

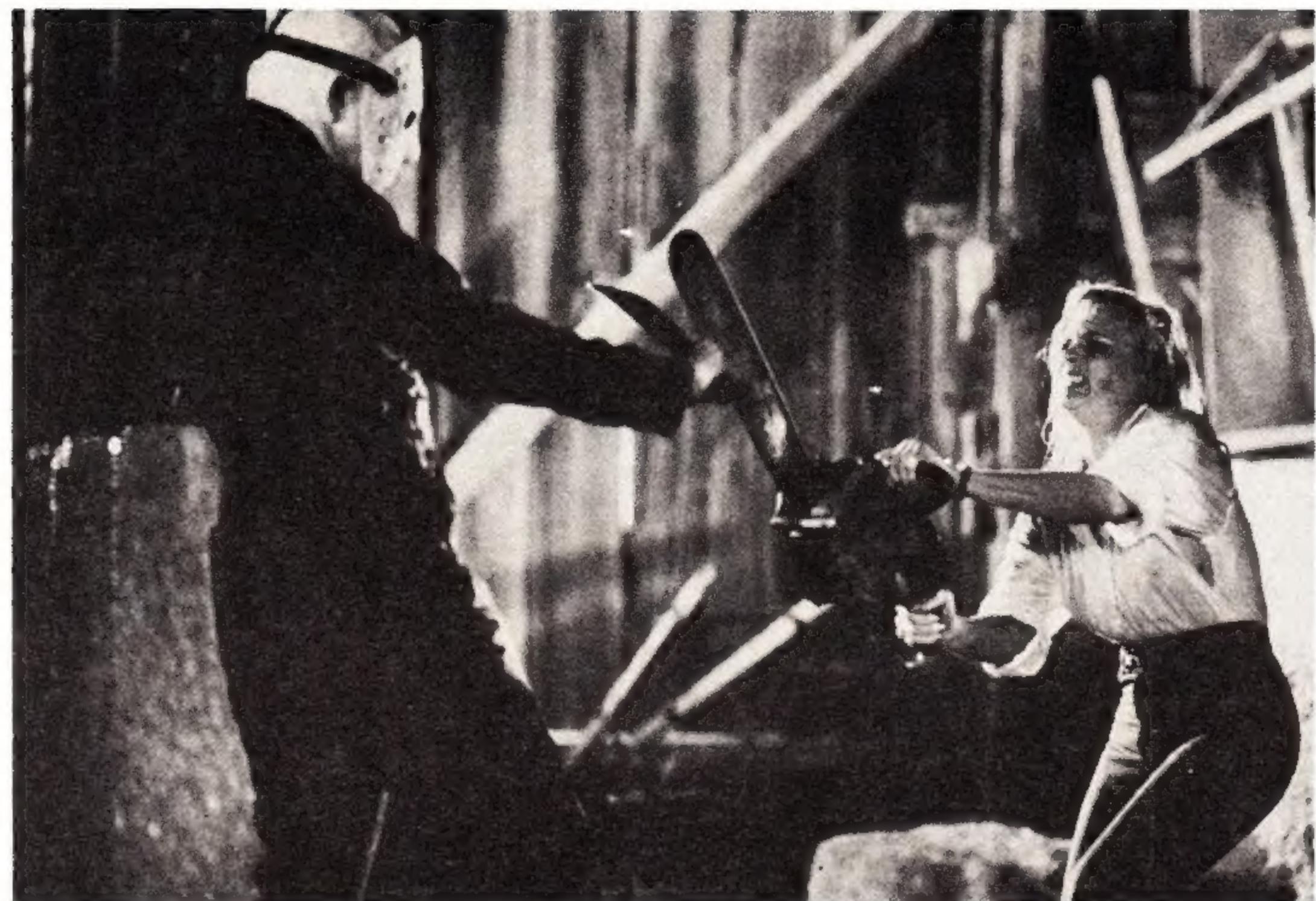
At the tender age of three years old, I witnessed a rather bizarre demonstration of reprisal that was featured on a television broadcast of Laurel and Hardy's *COME CLEAN* (1931). Stan Laurel, fully clothed and seated in a bathtub brimming with water, was blissfully unaware of the casualties he launched on his pal's domestic life during a single evening. A fuming Oliver Hardy restrained himself from vengeance until Stan capped the misadventures with a typically indiscreet fadeout line. The final straw broken, Ollie literally pulled the (bathtub) plug on his sidekick and Stan plunged down the drain. Ollie answers Mrs. Laurel's inquiry about the sudden absence of her husband with "he's gone to the beach."

Twenty-five years later the memory of *COME CLEAN* resurfaced during a screening of *FRIDAY*

THE 13TH—A NEW BEGINNING, specifically during one scene that revised Laurel and Hardy's habits of reciprocal destruction into modern wish fulfillment: a hulking maladjusted youth, handed an axe by less than vigilant guardians, is shredding logs into kindling wood (surely the most contrived depiction of aggressive therapy ever documented on film). Enter a nerd, a vexatious, fat slob whose every breath is drawn to consume junk-food and deafen helpless mortals with ceaseless whining. This wandering bore provokes the patience and, finally, sanity of the axe-wielder who turns the average person's fantasy into reality: he chops the blowhard into enough pigskin to upholster the NFL football float. The audience empathized with the "hatchet man," greeting his act of impetuosity with a round of applause.

The intent of the filmmakers, however, was not necessarily to provide black comedy relief, but to elect a red herring as Jason Voorhees reincarnate (the "original" Jason bit the dust in '84's Part IV episode; this year's addendum seeks a replacement for one of Paramount's most profitable non-contract players). If there's strength in numbers, this fifth installment of the *FRIDAY THE 13TH* series provides volume by tallying another crowd-pleasing body count.

But the routine carnage is no match for the (intentional?) humor prevalent in another scene: a female survivor of the surrogate Jason's rampage confronts the psychotic in



At the film's climax Pam Roberts (Melanie Kinnaman), the assistant director of a halfway house for disturbed youths, squares off against Jason with a chainsaw.

a climactic showdown. It appears she will enforce her own rescue by arming herself with a very intimidating chainsaw—that is, until her weapon's gas-powered engine runs dry and its whirling blade sputters to a timid halt. A similar gag was integrated into *THE SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE* though the humor was inherent in the film's scenario. Its encore here is ambiguously inserted as a device that may be alternately interpreted as fodder for suspense or a pratfall.

The horror content of the movie is far less memorable, exempting some tracking shots near the film's conclusion that abstractly suggest Jason II's annihilation of the entire world; the heroine lumbers through a fog-shrouded terrain that looks like a dryland voyage down the River Styx, complete with an illusory vision of human appendages (slain victims) growing into the nocturnal hinterland's rain-swept trees.

Another plus is Steinmann's use of Tommy Jarvis, the kid who dispatched Jason in the earlier film, who has grown up as a troubled teenager, played by John Shepard with all the quirky charm of an Anthony Perkins. Steinmann makes his film a character study of Jarvis, providing an anchor for the audience that no other film in the series has. Steinmann also makes Jarvis a martial arts expert, providing for some neat action sequences.

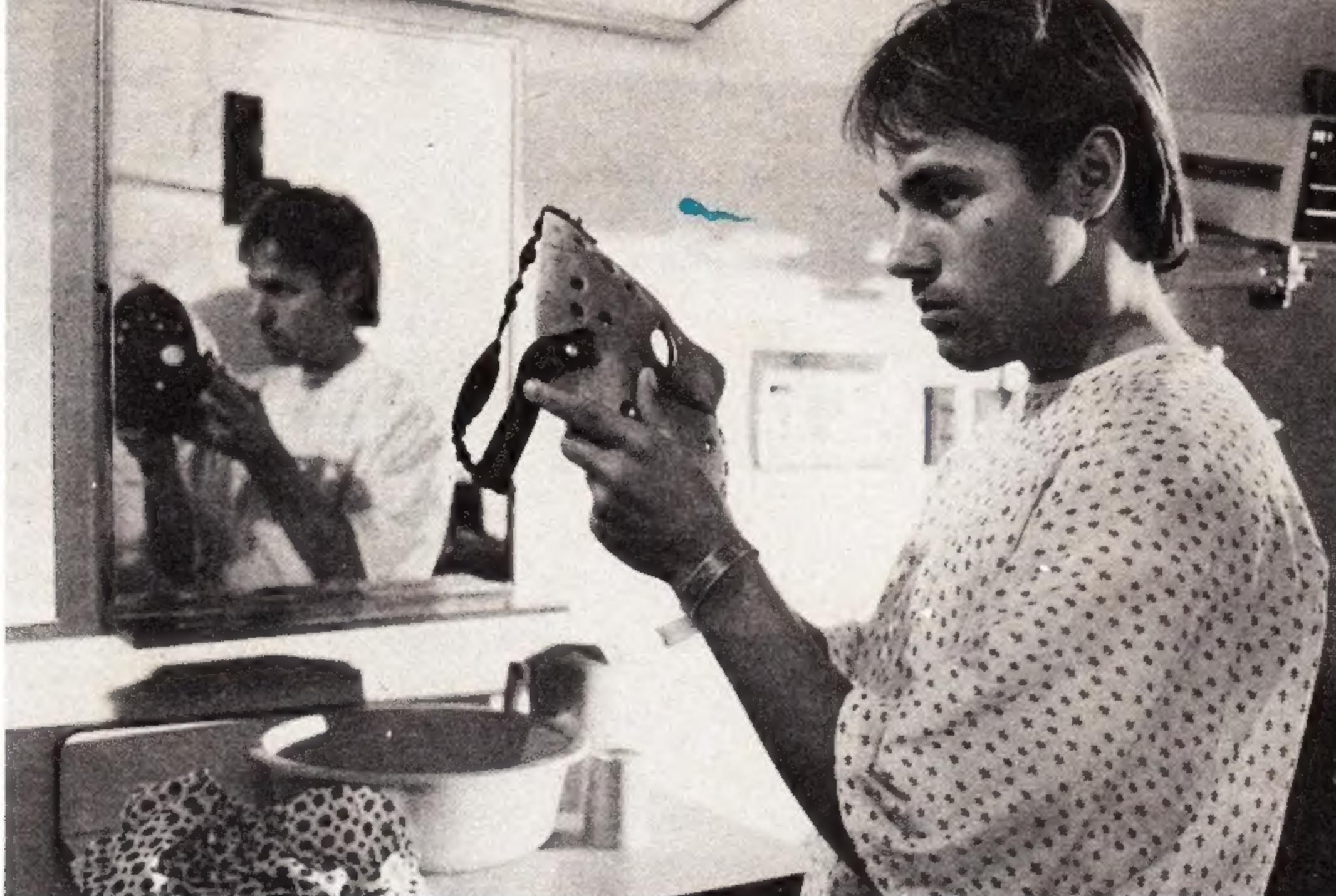
I have deliberately neglected to mention the plot since *PART V* is not so much a sequel as it is a remake of past *PART I* imitators. After all,

the universe of *FRIDAY THE 13TH* is cyclical; so predictable are the inevitable outcomes that ordinary *deja vu* is as refreshing as a rerun of *I LOVE LUCY*. At least this entry has initiated another avenue, along with the usual "sex begets violence" syndrome, that could prove catalytic to further fatalities. One of director Danny Steinman's extended kill sequences is staged in an out-house. Future quarry should be forewarned, "don't go to the bathroom!"

Finally, the "whodunit" disclosure of Jason's successor—or, more aptly, his motive for inheriting Jason's disposition—is the screen's most embarrassing denouement. After the demise of the murderer, Shepard is introduced as the lunatic heir to the hockey mask, insuring the longevity of the series.

PART V, however, is not the worst of the series. The comedy, even if an unintended hybrid of bad writing, is so arbitrarily applied within an invariable formula that it proves more pleasantly shocking than the habitual servings of spilled innards. The result is a sort of reverse psychology which not only deflects the movie's aching familiarity, but—briefly extricating itself from the context of its genre-related constrictions—proves funnier than the "spoofs" that are more self-conscious of their humor, e.g., *STUDENT BODIES*, *NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CLASS REUNION*, *WACKO*, etc. Here's hoping that subsequent entries will be geared to synchronize more humor with the horror. □

John Shepherd in his film debut as Tommy Jarvis, the troubled teenager who dispatched Jason in the previous film and now becomes heir to the killer's legacy.



Danny Steinmann on directing FRIDAY THE 13TH: A NEW BEGINNING

By Dan Scapperotti

The familiarity of the FRIDAY THE 13TH series is what director Danny Steinmann feels makes it a perennial money maker. Despite decreased production of slasher films in recent years, the annual horror tribute from Paramount Pictures never fails to turn a profit. "Every year it's like an event," said Steinmann in reference to the latest release. "Kids from broken homes always have FRIDAY THE 13TH to look forward to. The audience is about 50% ethnic. They're very blue collar."

Steinmann broke into the commercial film market as an associate producer for the legendary Gene Roddenberry and worked on several TV movies in the '70s, including a stint in England on the supernatural series pilot SPECTRE (1977). Although FRIDAY THE 13TH: A NEW BEGINNING is being touted as Steinmann's second feature, it is actually his third. "I directed and wrote THE UNSEEN with Barbara Bach, but I took my name off of it. What was released was a bastardized version of my film. It wasn't my vision at all."

Last year the director helmed the Linda Blair exploitation film SAVAGE STREETS which led to the FRIDAY THE 13TH assignment. Steinmann was handed a storyline within which he could do whatever he wanted, and spent three-and-a-half weeks rewriting the script. "Jason was dead," he said. "They'd gotten rid of their Darth Vader, which I thought was a big mistake. I had a lot of freedom. Fortunately [producer] Frank Mancuso was good. He listened."

Since the former films hadn't delved into any one character, Steinmann decided he would try a character study using Tommy Jarvis as his focal point for the story. "I went through fifty Tommys before we found John Shepherd," said Steinmann. "We didn't get this Tommy until the last day before we started



Danny Steinmann

filming. We were panic-stricken. Everything hinged around the kid being sensitive and believable. If we had gone with the Tommy we were about to settle on the picture would have been unreleasable."

The original script was a continuation of part four with young Tommy going to the hospital where they've taken Jason. Tommy kills the

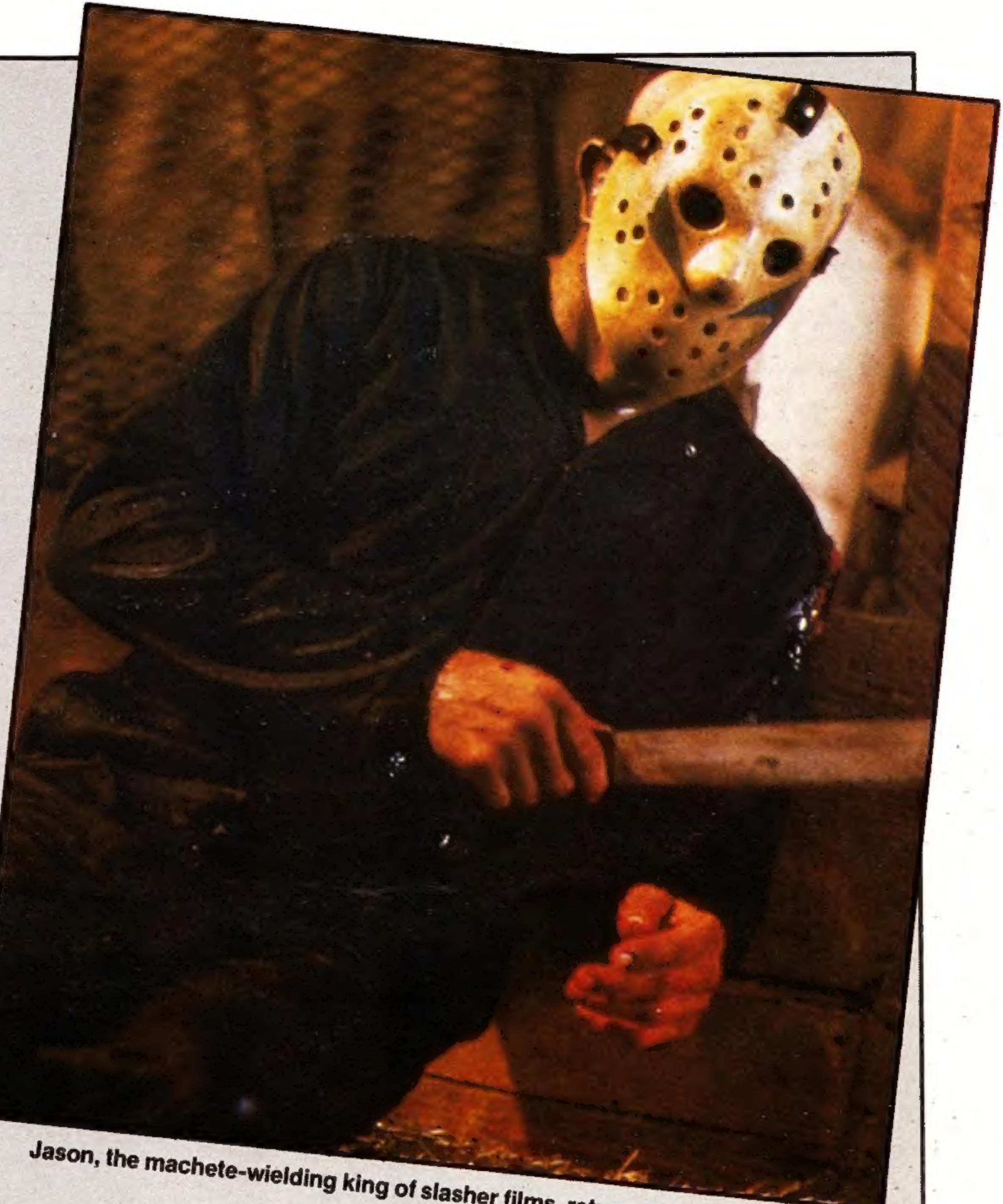
nurses and the sheriff and then has a confrontation with Jason as he rises from the operating table. It then cut to a mental institution with Tommy waking up screaming, instead of going to the halfway house as in the film. Steinmann rewrote the prologue, placing it in a graveyard during a violent storm.

"I contributed all the hallucination scenes to the script," he said. "The first scenes where Tommy sees Jason coming out of the grave. They had Tommy talking a lot and I didn't want him to talk at all so I cut back on his dialogue."

The film series is noted for its graphic violence which has been increasingly the target of the MPAA censors since the first film was released. The censor's axe fell heavily on A NEW BEGINNING. Steinmann was forced to return to the MPAA nine times before the requisite R rating was bestowed on his film.

"The violence in the film is about 10% of what I shot," bemoaned the director. "Consequently there is very little blood in this one, but the body count is much higher. Every kill was cut, starting with the first axe in the back. What you see is a kid leaving frame about to swing an axe, and a close-up of the victim screaming with the kid vaguely in the background. What was shot was a wide shot of the kid with the axe, and the victim coming towards the camera. The axe bursts through his back, blood spurting out all over. It was a good shot. It had about six chops, but they said 'No good.'"

The throat slashing scene was reduced optically to a bloodless close-up of the victim's face. The



Jason, the machete-wielding king of slasher films, returns in his fifth outing.

demise of the waitress originally had an axe going into her body as she falls to the ground quivering. "They said no quivering. We also had to cut the axe, so all you see is her lying on the ground."

Steinmann hated to see some of the gore go because it was responded to favorably by preview audiences. "There were two really big jolts, like the head falling out in JAWS, and they were cut. One was when the guy on the motorcycle gets his head chopped off. Everybody jumped. In the original version it was in three pieces. It was much richer."

Steinmann also bemoaned the fate of another important effects shot.

"The girl with no tits that was killed on the bed had a machete coming up through her that was cut. You get the idea, but you don't see the effect that Marty Becker made."

Also trimmed was extensive nudity shot by Steinmann, who helmed an X-rated porn hit called HIGHRISE in the late sixties. If the director had known how seriously the censors would tamper with the film he estimates he could have cut his 33-day shooting schedule to about 25 days. Some of the effects shots took five or six hours just to set up. The effects budget took only \$60,000

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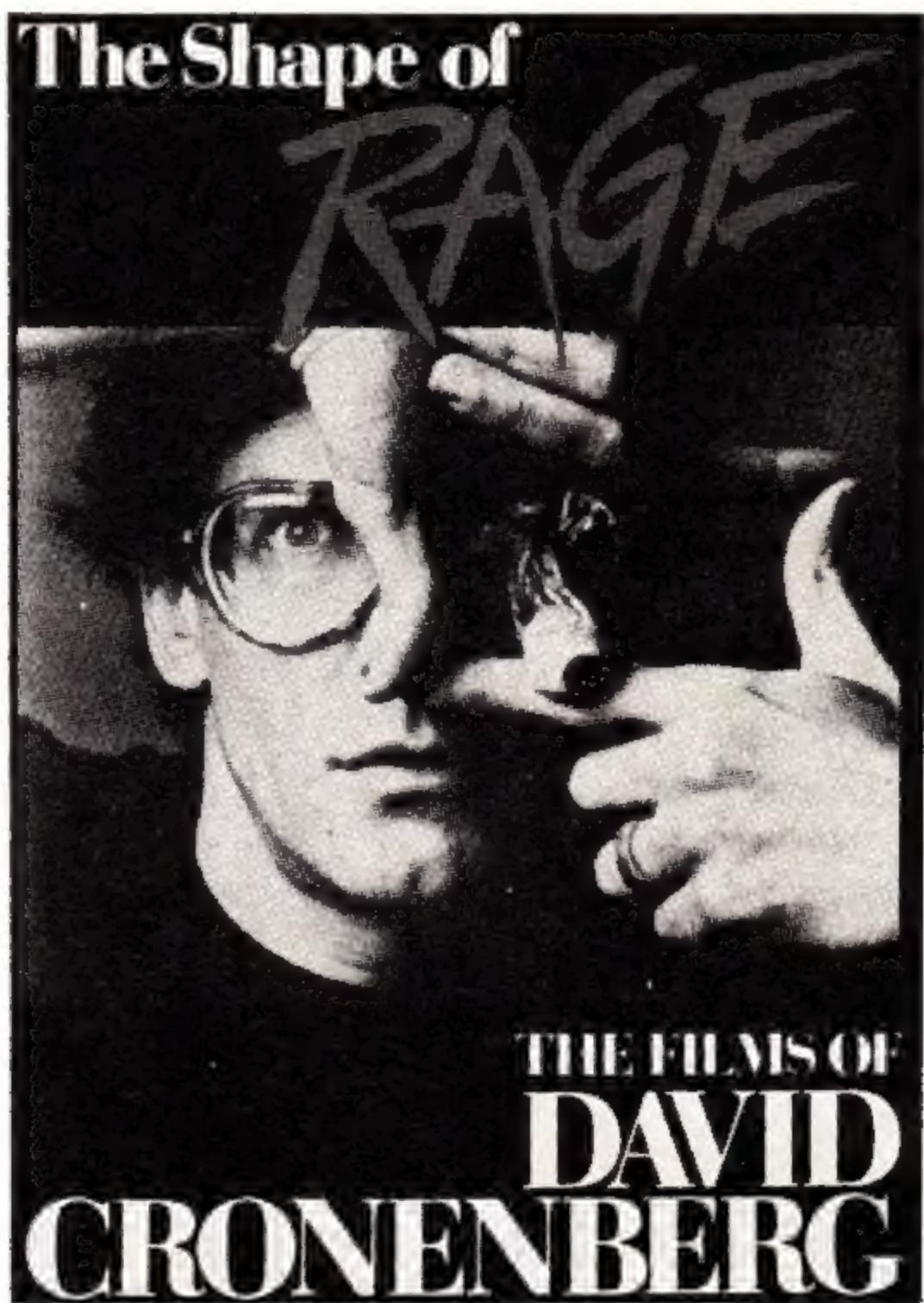
The body count continues: motorcycle-riding Junior Hubbard (Ron Sloan) gets his head lopped-off (left), and a teenage punk (Corey Parker) gets his throat slashed.



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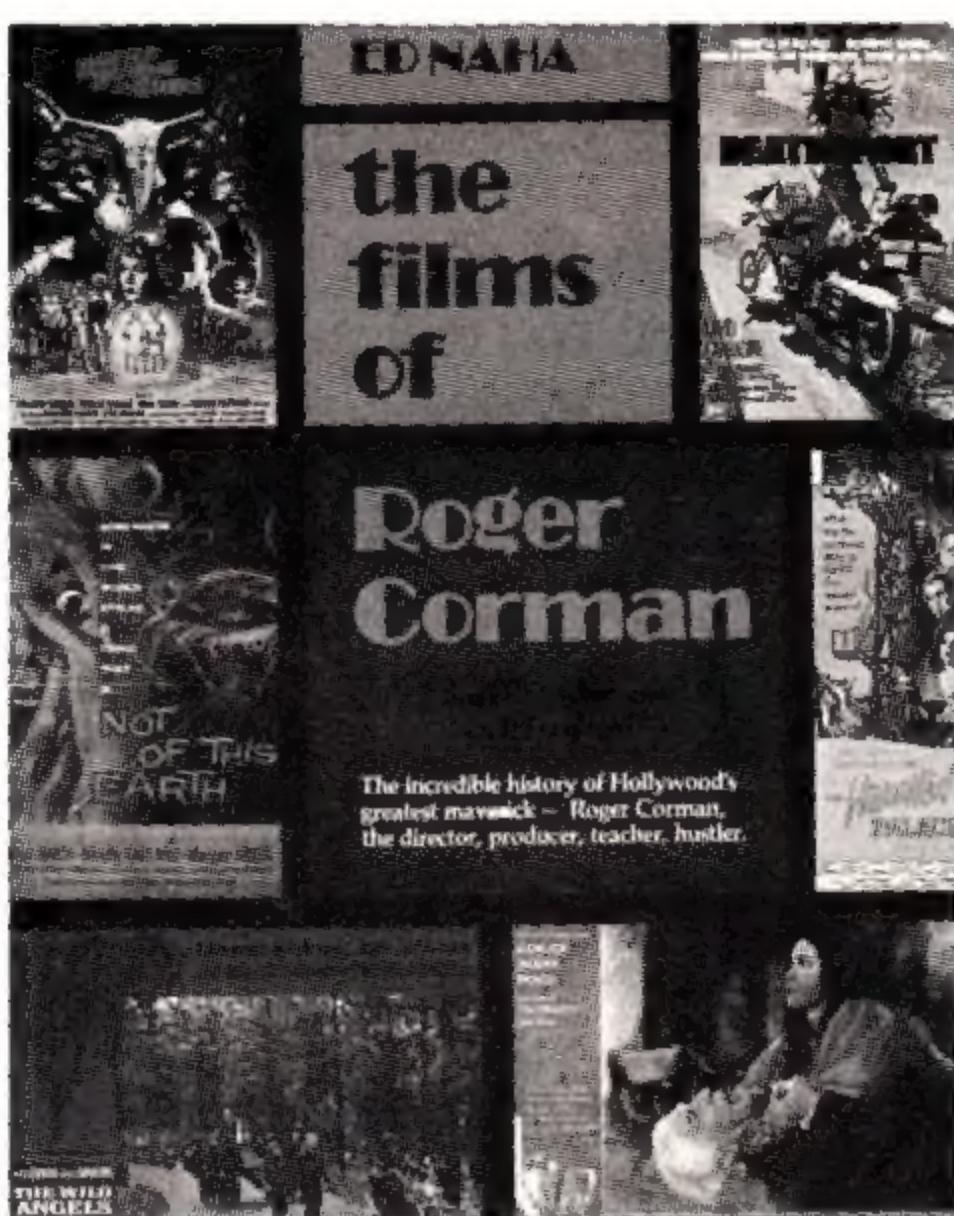
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DAY OF THE DEAD

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frustrated and frightened at forces beyond their control or understanding. Richard Liberty at times goes over the top as the mad doctor obsessed with his guinea pig; Howard Sherman gives just the right amount of pathos to his role as the zombie Bub, as he struggles to recall his former life.

Romero depends less on the blood and guts visuals, the trademark of the series. While Romero doesn't cringe from showing a zombie attack in gruesome detail, the gore is not as prevalent, and therefore more effective. Tom Savini and a six-man team were responsible for the extensive makeup effects that included dozens of zombie extras.

This time Romero goes even further with his tradition of introducing unlikely heroes. After presenting a black lead in the 1968 premier film, he now gives us a strong female lead in Lori Cardille, unhampered by sexual stereotype, and a *zombie* hero. Bub, who has an awareness uncharacteristic of the species thanks to some Pavlovian training by Dr. Logan, ends up in a vengeful gunfight with Rhodes as the latter flees through the underground corridors. All the white males in the film are depicted as either vicious or mad. The director infuses his story with strong, believable characters and realistic dialogue that may offend some. Strong language adds power to the confrontational scenes between Rhodes and Sarah.

The film's narrative structure closely follows that of the original film. The movie's basic conflict is between the scientists and the military. The external pressure of the zombies allows human foibles and emotions to run unchecked. Tension mounts because of the emotional breakdown of the group whose infighting and power struggles take up most of the screen time, with intermittent zombie skirmishes used to reinforce a sense of lurking danger. The slender thread that holds group antagonisms at bay is finally broken and all hell breaks loose underground when the soldiers learn that Logan has been using their comrades as fodder for the imprisoned zombies.

The action is deadly serious, but this doesn't prevent Romero from liberally sprinkling black humor throughout the proceedings. DAY OF THE DEAD is a horror film with a sense of humor that delivers. The zombies themselves, dressed in recognizable clothes representing their status in life (the bride and groom, a rock band, etc.) are funny while at the same time menacing. At one point Logan, peeved as any parent would be at the failure of a zombie to follow his instructions, turns out the lights in the laboratory—leaving the zombie chained to the wall—and admonishes, "You just think about it."

PURPLE ROSE

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But if, like Cecilia, the audience feels cheated by Gil's betrayal, it is because they, like she, have let motion picture worlds dictate their expectations. Allen couldn't abide a Hollywood-end on his version of the ROSE, thus demolishing the scaffolding that holds together his own world view, a view of life expressed by a disbelieving Cecilia as "a movie with no point and no happy ending."

In the course of another meta-film, Preston Sturges' SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS, the protagonist, a comedy director with "serious" ambitions, learns that the pleasure he gives people with lightweight antics is more valuable than the sorrow he lays on them with preachy melodramas. To comedians like Sturges and Keaton, movies were a safe harbor, a happy place for temporary refuge and rejuvenation. For all his love of movies and his facility with film, Allen seems to view the medium as a fraud, a delusion that makes real life all the more miserable by offering a "reel" glimpse of what it might be. □

FRIDAY THE 13TH

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of the film's \$2 million production costs.

The characters of Ethel and Junior Hubbard, the real lunatics that live next door to the halfway house, Steinmann played for laughs, but their scenes were trimmed after negative reactions during previews. "The audiences wanted to get to the kills," said Steinmann. "I approached it like a cartoon. You can't take it seriously. I had to take the transformation of Tommy seriously because my focus was going to be on him."

Most of the five-week shoot was done at night on location in and around Los Angeles with Camerio the prime location. The filming involved a lot of rain, necessitating the use of huge rain towers to simulate the storm scenes. The towers rise about 40 feet above the ground like giant teepees. Five towers must be spread around to give the even rainfall effect, and it takes a while for the water pressure to build up sufficiently to evenly spread the "rain" into the foreground and background. And you have to hide those towers from the camera's eye.

Corey Feldman reprised his role as young Tommy, Jason's killer in FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE FINAL CHAPTER. Steinmann had to wait for the young actor to finish his lead role in GOONIES. Steinmann had finished principal photography and had begun cutting and editing the film when Feldman became available—a month later. Steinmann went back and spent two days filming the opening sequences with Feldman in the cemetery.

Next up for Danny Steinmann: LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT PART II. □